



Time for Nature



Two very different parks

Point Pelee and Quttinirpaaq national parks of Canada

Point Pelee National Park of Canada is the country's southernmost national park. Quttinirpaaq is Canada's northernmost national park. The two parks could hardly be more different.

First, Point Pelee is small – just 15 square km. Quttinirpaaq, at over 37,000 square km, is one of Canada's biggest national parks. Second, Point Pelee is ecologically rich. It contains a multitude of species suited to a warm, moist climate. Quttinirpaaq, on the other hand, is largely a polar desert, just 800 km from the North Pole.

How different are they?

Separated by more than 4000 kilometres, the two parks are as different as their distance suggests.

- Point Pelee has some 60 species of trees – more than any other national park. Quttinirpaaq has no trees.
- More than 380 bird species have been seen at Point Pelee. In Quttinirpaaq, 34 species have been recorded.
- Point Pelee has over 170 frost-free days a year. Quttinirpaaq rests on permafrost – permanently frozen ground.

These numbers tell an interesting story. Both parks are ecologically unique, and their differences are precisely what make them vital to Canada's national park system.



Scientists and hikers are attracted by Quttinirpaaq's ice fields.

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The muskox is one of the Arctic species that finds a home in Quttinirpaaq.

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Ecological distinctions

Despite its size, Point Pelee has more species of plants and animals than any other Canadian national park. We can even find such southern species as the [prickly pear cactus](#), the hackberry tree and the [eastern mole](#). Each spring and fall, migrating birds and butterflies congregate in Point Pelee. People come from all over the world to view the spectacle.

In Quttinirpaaq, [wolves](#), [Arctic hares](#) and [muskoxen](#) roam freely. Even the endangered [Peary caribou](#) finds a refuge here. Quttinirpaaq offers wilderness travellers vistas of open tundra, rocky cliffs and majestic fiords at the top of the world. Glaciers cover a third of the park, and scientists are attracted by the ice fields, which are 100,000 years old.



Point Pelee has more than 380 bird species.

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Vive la différence!

Very few people visit Quttinirpaaq: it is just too rugged and far away. By contrast, over 300,000 people visit Point Pelee each year. The challenge for Point Pelee managers is to protect the environment while making sure visitors enjoy the park. It's a fine balancing act.

In Quttinirpaaq's unspoiled wilderness, managers want to keep the park pristine, but they also focus on people. Visitors need to be well prepared and self sufficient. They must plan for the contingencies of travel in a hostile environment. Rescue operations are difficult and expensive. If travellers are stranded, they may need to wait several days before help can arrive.



Over 300,000 people visit Point Pelee each year.

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Protecting Canada's bounty

Because they are so different, both Point Pelee and Quttinirpaaq protect unique elements of our world, for us all to enjoy. They represent two of the 39 natural regions that Parks Canada is aiming to protect as part of the [system of national parks](#) across Canada.